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EFFECTIVE FLEET INTEGRATION: IMPROVING
THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE CARRIER BATTLE
GROUP TO MEET REGIONAL CHALLENGES IN THE
POST COLD WAR ERA

by

Patrick Driscoll
LCDR USN



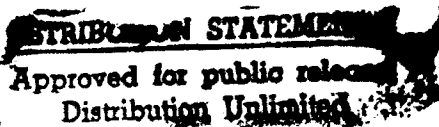
A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: *Patrick Driscoll*

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Abstract of
**EFFECTIVE FLEET INTEGRATION: IMPROVING
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GROUP TO MEET REGIONAL CHALLENGES IN THE
POST COLD WAR ERA**

The modern carrier battle group was designed and trained to counter Soviet expansionism. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the National Military Strategy has shifted to concentrating on regional instability and uncertainty. The employment of the carrier battle group must reflect this change if it is to remain a key element in two of the fundamental strategic pillars; Forward Presence and Crisis Response. The purpose of this paper is to determine how the Navy can better train and employ its premier fleet asset, the CVBG, to meet this new regional challenge.

This paper focuses on the armed forces available today and how their employment could be optimized in light of reductions in the military budget. By briefly examining recent operational employments of the CVBG, weaknesses in flexibility and interoperability are noted. Recommendations include varying the composition of embarked carrier air wings, optimizing the forces within the battle group, and developing the ability to effectively integrate into a joint campaign.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union in 1989 freed the Bush Administration to end a strategy of containment which had been pursued for over forty years. U.S. policy shifted from the threat of Soviet expansionism to focusing on regional instability and uncertainty. This new National Security Strategy is based on four fundamental foundations; Strategic Deterrence, Forward Presence, Crisis Response and Reconstitution.

In January of 1992, General Colin Powell, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff presented the National Military Strategy (NMS) which reflected these changes. The new NMS concentrates on the emerging regional threats to world stability and peace. Unified Combatant Commanders (CINCs) are assigned Areas of Responsibility (AOR) and must deal with all the challenges within that region. Working collectively with friendly nations to improve alliances and interoperability while deterring would-be aggressors through forward presence, the CINC can prevent major regional conflicts rather than fight them.

In order for the strategies of Forward Presence and Crisis Response to be successful, the CINC must have adequate forces to stay engaged in the region. The NMS outlines the Base Force, describing the projected level to which our military forces are scheduled to be reduced by 1995. The prioritization of domestic programs aimed at economic recovery and fiscal reform by the Clinton Administration will further accelerate and deepen reductions in the number of active duty forces. Costly overseas bases are being closed while troops, aircraft and ships are being

deactivated in order to save money. At the same time, ethnocentric, religious and nationalistic movements in heterogeneous populations formerly suppressed during the Cold War now increase the threat to regional stability around the globe. The NMS addresses this dilemma of reduced forces available to deal with an increasingly unstable and uncertain world by establishing some strategic principles.

Strategic Principles. These doctrinal principals taken in aggregate prescribe how the military will meet the challenge of reduced resources and increased tasking. The strategic principles of Readiness and Strategic Agility are critical to the success of the NMS. The Readiness principle states that our forces must be trained, equipped and prepared to fight quickly in response to a regional crisis. This means that each branch of the military must be able to execute its traditional mission as well as operate effectively with all the other Services on a moments notice. With such ready forces available, they will require rapid movement to the crisis area. Forward deployed units can respond quickly from within the region, but as the scope of the conflict increases the military must have the capacity to rapidly move CONUS forces anywhere in the world to support the CINCs. The goal of these two strategic principles is to have the capability to rapidly deploy combat ready forces which will easily integrate with those already in-theater.

Once that capability is established, the regional commander can use the other warfighting strategic principles -- Maritime and

Aerospace Superiority, Technological Superiority, Power Projection and Decisive Force -- to fight and win a conflict.

The Navy's White Paper ...From the Sea, articulates how the Navy and Marine Corps plan to support the regional operational commander to meet this challenge:

The Navy and Marine Corps will now respond to crisis and can provide the initial, "enabling" capability for joint operations in conflict--as well as continued participation in any sustained effort. We will be part of a "sea-air-land" team trained to respond immediately to the Unified Commanders as they execute national policy.'

Purpose. The purpose of this paper is to determine how the Navy can better train and employ its premier fleet asset, the Carrier Battle Group (CVBG), to implement this new strategy. Navy participation in the DESERT STORM air campaign, the EL DORADO CANYON political strike against Libya and operation URGENT FURY in Grenada will be reviewed. By examining these recent operational employments, weaknesses in the Navy's ability to act as an enabling force in joint operations as well as effectively integrating into sustained operations will be highlighted. Recommendations include varying the composition of the carrier air wing of forward deployed carriers, optimizing the forces within the CVBG to meet the regional threat and developing the ability to effectively integrate into, or lead a joint campaign.

I I . MAJOR REGIONAL CONTINGENCY

DESERT STORM illustrates how the CVBG could have provided the CINC with more offensive firepower without a coincidental increase in support assets (more carriers and combat logistics support). The performance of the six aircraft carriers and the associated air wings was an unqualified success on the tactical level, but operationally the Navy could have been more effective. The Navy was not prepared to exercise flexibility in determining the composition of the carrier air wings or trained to fully integrate into a joint air campaign. Had they been, the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) would have had a substantially higher "tooth to tail" ratio to work with. The operations conducted by the three aircraft carriers of the Red Sea Battle Force best highlight the relevant points

The embarked carrier air wings had standard composition with only slight modification from peacetime cruising.² Medium and Light Attack squadrons were augmented with a few extra jets, therefore half the normal compliment of S-3B aircraft were stationed ashore.

Strikes from the Red Sea. A typical strike included 25-30 aircraft, half of which were dedicated to power projection. The four divisions of attackers (16 aircraft) would be supported by up to eight escort fighters, an E-2 for command and control, two EA-6B electronic warfare jammers, two K-A6 tankers and possibly an S-3B aircraft performing in an intelligence collection role. The strike group would launch from a carrier and rendezvous with USAF tankers near the Red Sea coast. Once joined, this armada of thirty-plus

aircraft then ranged across the Great Nefud Desert, constantly refueling until the tankers hit their turn-back point a few dozen miles from the Iraqi border. The attack plan would then unfold. The strike leader would contact the E-2C command and control aircraft which arrived on-station early to coordinate with the airborne E-3 AWACS. Fighters swept ahead of the package looking for enemy MIGS. Jammers proceeded to assigned station, interdicting Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) radars and destroying them as required. The strikers pressed to their target, made their attack runs and then retired back towards the tankers. During the strike the S-3B would fly along the Saudi-Iraq border collecting intelligence.

Joint Battlespace Management. While this evolution was taking place a redundant battlespace management system flew idly by. The AWACS was there, ready and able to provide command and control for the strike. Divisions of USAF F-15C fighters were perched on Combat Air Patrol stations, capable of providing protection against any air-to-air threat which developed. The AWACS also was able to relay a far greater amount of relevant intelligence than the S-3B. The employment of the eight F-14 fighters along with the E-2 and S-3B aircraft was redundant and eliminating them would not have significantly raised the risk faced by the strikers.

For further evidence that the Navy strikers could survive without their organic support package, one only has to examine operations in the Kuwait Theater of Operation (KTO). Due to the limited number of tankers available to the Red Sea Battle Force, only enough fuel was provided for strike aircraft to make the long

transit to the KTO to attack Republican Guard units. These strikers would leave their USAF tankers, contact the eastern AWACS for command and control, rely on F-15C MIGCAP for airborne threat protection and finally EF-111/F-4G Wild Weasel assets for Suppression Of Enemy Defenses (SEAD). The day and night strikes flown by the Red Sea attack squadrons to the KTO were tactically sound but eliminated the redundant nature of the Navy's adherence to the "stand alone" strike mentality.

The F-14 and S-3 aircraft were redundant in the power projection mission and therefore not required by the JFACC. They also were not required by the battle force for fleet defense. For instance, any surface search or antisubmarine warfare (ASW) mission requirements normally tasked to the embarked S-3 could have been accomplished by shore based Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) working in coordination with the surface ships and their ASW helicopters. Eliminating the need for the carrier based S-3 would allow room on the various flight decks for approximately 15 additional strike aircraft.

Were 74 F-14 fighter/interceptors necessary to meet the air threat to ships in the Red Sea when that battle force had two Ticonderoga Class (CG-47) Aegis Cruisers assigned? These guided missile cruisers, equipped with the phased array SPY-1 radar, are the Navy's premier antiair platform. Two Aegis cruisers working with an E-2 early warning aircraft continuously airborne over the force could provide sufficient fleet air defense. Certainly two squadrons of fighters (24 F-14s) providing 24 hour a day alert capability would insure any additional margin of safety required.

This would allow the replacement of 48 F-14s with 48 additional strike aircraft.

By tailoring the carrier air wing to meet the threat, the JFACC could benefit from a 75% increase in the power projection capability of the Red Sea Battle Force without a significant increase in support structure. Four F-14 and three S-3 squadrons could be replaced by a mix of sixty additional strike aircraft. In terms of bombs-on-target, this is equivalent to the power projection assets of two additional carrier air wings without any additional overhead cost!

The important point here is not the exact numbers or combinations, but the possibilities which come with flexibility and integration. Consider that the USS AMERICA (CV-66) left the Red Sea Battle Force in February and joined the Persian Gulf Battle Force to mass striking power for the air interdiction effort in the KTO. The threat in the Persian Gulf was much higher in terms of fleet defense. Those carriers required their organic F-14, E-2 and S-3 aircraft due to the danger from mines, enemy surface ships and air attack. If the Navy was truly efficient, it would have been able to change the composition of America's air wing to meet the changing threat.

Flexibility would permit the Navy to alter the composition of the carrier air wing to best meet the threat and accomplish the mission. Relying on the Aegis Cruisers as the primary anti-air platform while MPA, embarked ASW helicopters and surface ships dealt with the reduced submarine threat, would permit more strike aircraft to operate from the carrier's flight deck.

Interoperability enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the forces engaged. Better integration into the joint battlespace control structure would mean a significant increase in the number of air interdiction sorties generated by the battle force. Elimination of redundancy while participating in a joint air campaign brings decisive offensive firepower to bear. Rear Admiral Mixson, Commander of the Red Sea Battle Force said:

The air campaign was orchestrated by the Air Force under its umbrella for coordinating air warfare--the air tasking order. The six months of Desert Shield enabled Red Sea and Persian Gulf naval forces to learn to operate within this system...We need to get with it and train to future wars in truly joint campaign warfare exercises.'

To be an effective participant in a major sustained joint campaign, the Navy must improve the way it trains and employs the various assets of the CVBG by:

1. Flexibility. Task the functional wing commanders to develop the capability to rapidly move the various types of squadrons to forward deployed CVBGs. These squadrons would deploy in response to a request by the Unified Commander facing a regional crisis. CINCs should develop contingency plans for dealing with embarked carrier squadrons not required for a particular operation. By basing these aircraft ashore or coordinating transoceanic movement back to CONUS (as USAF and Marine Corps squadrons do on a regular basis), the air wing can be restructured with aircraft tailored to meet the threat.
2. Optimization. The aircraft carrier, its air wing and associated surface ships were designed to counter the Soviet threat. Today's

regional focus means that the traditional function of each element within the CVBG must be reevaluated in light of what is required in a given scenario. If the threat is 36 Backfire bombers armed with antiship missiles then 24 F-14 interceptors are required. If the threat is a third world country with 12 MIG-21s then an Aegis Cruiser can handle the defensive counter air mission.

3. Interoperability. Admiral Mixson stated that realistic joint campaign training is essential before the next regional contingency. The Navy should integrate and evaluate carrier air wing performance with an Air Force composite wing during the intermediate and advanced warfare phase of the training cycle.

Recently, the Navy has begun to experiment with the composition of the carrier air wing by embarking a Special Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CV-71). This battle group is scheduled to deploy with only half the normal compliment of F-14 fighters and no S-3 ASW aircraft. In their place, an additional FA-18 squadron and a reinforced Marine Rifle Company with associated vertical lift will deploy.* This is a step in the right direction, but until the Navy develops the flexibility to alter embarked air wings, optimizes the forces within the battle group and effectively integrates into joint campaigning, it fails to meet the goals of ...From the Sea.

III. PEACETIME CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS: SURGICAL STRIKE

The DESERT STORM air campaign required Navy power projection forces to work within an Air Force battlespace management plan. The opposite of this can occur during a peacetime contingency operation (PCO) like a surgical strike. Operation EL DORADO CANYON was a single tactical air strike against Libyan military and terrorist support targets. The strategic objective of this modern day gunboat diplomacy was to punish and deter Colonel Gadhafi from sponsoring international terrorism. Unified Commanders are well aware of the "bad actors" in their Area of Responsibility, and are tasked with preparing contingency plans to react quickly and decisively against them.

Plans for the EL DORADO CANYON raid evolved during the ongoing confrontation between Libya and the United States in 1985 and 1986. The Reagan Administration was determined to exercise the right of Freedom of the Seas recognized by international law but contested by Colonel Gadhafi. Sending a naval battle force across Gadhafi's "line of death" resulted in numerous salvos being fired by both sides. The U.S. Navy destroyed SAM sites and patrol boats which had fired upon or threatened naval forces in international waters. The Libyans, frustrated by their military impotence, intensified their terrorist attacks aimed at U.S. citizens. This escalation of events peaked when President Reagan ordered the destruction of five terrorist related targets in Libya in retaliation for the bombing of the La Belle Disco in Germany.

Criteria for the Political Raid. Vice Admiral Kelso, Commander Sixth Fleet was tasked with planning the operation.

Political surgical strikes are designed to send a signal to the international community as well as the offending party. To be successful they must accomplish several essentials: (1) Demonstrate the intent of the United States. (2) The results must justify the use of force. Clear correlation between the political objective and the military targets is essential. (3) To garner international and domestic approval civilian casualties and collateral damage must be minimized. Loss of U.S. servicemen or American prisoners/hostages will doom the operation to failure. (4) The evolution must be executed with surprise and be concluded quickly in a decisive manner.

The Sixth Fleet Commander chose to strike the five targets with conventional naval air power flying from two aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean Sea and USAF tactical bombers based in Great Britain. This joint raid required over 70 Navy and 50 Air Force aircraft including 27 Navy and 18 Air Force strikers.⁵ The Navy was primarily responsible for the overall management of the battlespace during EL DORADO CANYON, much like the Air Force was in Desert Storm. Naval forces were responsible for air superiority, suppression of enemy air defenses, command and control and finally search and rescue. The role of the Air Force was power projection; more bombs-on-target.

Although the strike was a success on the strategic level, the results were disappointing on the operational and tactical level. First, operational security was lost due to the extensive media coverage preceding the strike. This was due in part to the deployment of over thirty aircraft from the United States to bases

in Great Britain which were required to support the USAF portion of the strike.⁴ Arrival of the tankers and other support aircraft confirmed press reports that an operation was underway. Similar press coverage of the deployment of USAF AWACS aircraft to Egypt had forced the cancellation of another operation underway against Libya in 1983.⁷ There is good reason to believe that the press would have announced the launch of strike aircraft from British bases had it not been for the Official Secrets Act in Great Britain.⁸ This certainly could prove disastrous to any military operation.

Tactically the strike bordered on failure. Of the five targets selected, only one sustained enough damage to be categorized as destroyed. There were approximately 37 civilian casualties and considerable damage to residential neighborhoods. The loss of two U.S. Airman and their aircraft proved costly.⁹

Given the guidelines listed above, how would the CINC plan to execute a raid similar to EL DORADO CANYON today? There are several factors which will drive the next political raid to a joint USAF/Navy effort.

Weapons of Choice. PGMs will be one of the weapons of choice because of the numerous advantages they lend to the political raid. As evidenced by the Gulf War, the accuracy of PGMs allows the planner to put the fewest number of aircraft in harm's way. This helps reduce the risk of U.S. servicemen becoming casualties or prisoners/hostages, and significantly reduces the possible number of civilian casualties and collateral damage. There is the additional bonus with PGMs of a video recording made during the

last phase of the attack. On-board equipment videotapes the bomb's flight to the target, providing the international community with visible evidence of a successful raid. This minor technological spin-off helped make the EL DORADO CANYON raid a success.

Other technologies which are essential to the successful political strike are stealth and the cruise missile. Neither were used in the Libyan raid because these special technologies were being held in-reserve for use against the Soviet threat. After the massive exposure the F-117 Stealth fighter and Navy Tomahawk Land Attack Cruise Missile (TLAM) received in the Gulf War, it is likely that these types of weapons will be available to the CINC to execute a PCO.

What platforms are available to the CINC which incorporate PGM, Stealth and cruise missile technology, and how can they best be integrated? Ideally, the CINC could schedule a combined F-117 stealth fighter strike in coordination with a barrage of ship/submarine launched cruise missiles. This would be a simple operation requiring little support structure in the actual attack phase, but there are drawbacks which make this approach difficult from the CINC's point of view. First, the cruise missile is accurate and its delivery presents little risk to U.S. servicemen, but its small warhead can do little against hardened targets. To destroy certain targets higher explosives with penetrating capability are required. The F-117 certainly has this capability but it may be difficult to deploy. Being a tactical bomber, the F-117 would have to launch from a forward, host nation air base. This fact illustrates the difficulty the CINC may have in employing

theater assets for political purposes. First, the tactical aircraft are going to require substantial tanker support to reach a target country like Libya from bases in Great Britain or Germany. As described earlier, the sudden surge of support assets into theater can provide tipper information to target nations which could halt the operation before it ever started. Next, the host nation may not allow the United States to launch a unilateral strike from their soil. Margaret Thatcher indicated to United States officials that EL DORADO CANYON was a one time deal and not to ask for launch permission again.¹⁰ Even if the host nation (primarily Great Britain or Germany) allowed U.S. armed aircraft to take off, adjacent countries could deny overflight permission. As the number of forward air bases declines with the reduction of the base force, this problem will become increasingly acute.

For the political reasons described above, the operational commander would be forced to forgo the forward based F-117 and turn to the carrier battle group. The CVBG, by optimizing all its varied forces, is particularly well suited to manage the battlespace during the political strike. The F-14 can provide lethal offensive counter air while the Aegis Cruiser functions as the primary defensive counter air platform. Additional strike aircraft could be flown aboard in place of the organic S-3B aircraft. The organic SH-60, MPA and attached destroyers would be assigned responsibility for screening any submarine threat. The E-2 Hawkeye would provide command and control while the power projection arm of the air wing, (FA-18s, A-6Es and EA-6Bs) attacked the enemy defenses and

objective targets. TLAM capable ships and submarines would launch their cruise missiles against fixed, relatively soft targets.

The battle force would control the sea and air in the vicinity of the target country while the TLAM shooters and strike aircraft attacked inland targets. The problem that Vice Admiral Kelso had still exists though; not enough firepower for a single strike against all the targets simultaneously. He solved the problem by tasking F-111 bombers based in Great Britain.

For the same reasons that using the F-117 would be impractical so would the use of European based F-15E Strike Eagles (the F-111 replacement in Europe). The massive tanker fleet required from the United States would serve as a warning to the military of the intended target country and the problems with host nation approval rule out the possible use of USAF tactical bombers. There is still considerable firepower available to the operational planner.

Aside from the political considerations of employing the CONUS based B-2 bomber, it is an ideal platform to integrate into the strike plan. A few B-2 stealth bombers could covertly launch from the United States and target the critical nodes in the enemy's air defense system. This would begin the process of rolling back the enemy's defenses, permitting the less stealthy aircraft to exploit these weakness during their attack. Conventional B-1B and B-52 aircraft could add decisive firepower to the strike. The B-1 could destroy light-to-medium defended targets today and more difficult targets in the near future when the aircraft gains the ability to carry PGMs. The B-52 force could strike numerous targets with long range cruise missiles and precision guided stand-off weapons.

Using the lethal firepower of the bomber force based in the United States eliminates the need for host nation support and helps preserve the element of surprise.

JFACC Requirement. Given enough time, the planning for such a diverse strike could be done. But today's environment does not always permit lengthy planning periods and extensive training evolutions. The strategic principles of Readiness and Strategic Agility require that U.S. forces be trained and ready to integrate quickly to build decisive force in projecting power. The method available to the CINC for planning a joint political strike like this one would involve assigning a Joint Force Commander (JFC) capable of providing the required integration and coordination. Since this scenario is strictly an air campaign, the JFC may choose to appoint or assume the role of JFACC. According to the draft publication on joint air operations:

Normally, JFACC will be assigned to the Service component commander possessing the preponderance of campaign air assets and the resources required for the job. It is imperative that JFACC have proper facilities, communications systems and a properly manned and trained staff."

Since the Navy would have the largest air component in this type of operation, it is logical that a naval aviator be assigned as the JFACC. In scenarios like this one which are small in scale, of short duration and lack substantial host nation support, the Navy component will most likely be called upon to function as, or assign

the JFACC. How well prepared is the Navy to meet this responsibility?

1. Facilities. On a ship where space is a precious commodity, providing the berthing and operating area for a joint air staff is no small matter. There are numerous recent examples of large joint staffs working from Navy ships so the problem is clearly manageable. One advantage of working from a ship like an aircraft carrier is the collocation of many resources and operational assets.

2. Communications Systems. The lessons learned from Desert Storm have helped solve many of the communications problems the Navy experienced trying to assimilate into a joint air campaign. The Navy is currently acquiring the very basic and essential capability (i.e. SHF communication equipment) to task diverse air components via an Air Tasking Order. Very difficult problems remain unsolved that would hinder a Navy JFACC from functioning properly. For example, the Navy currently lacks the embarked capability to transmit and receive high quality imagery which is critical in intelligence analysis, targeteering and bomb damage assessment.

3. Properly Manned and Trained Staff. The draft publication dealing with joint air operations describes a notional JFACC staff. This model includes 50 billet descriptions and is clearly geared for the high end of the conflict spectrum, more appropriate for an air campaign similar to Desert Storm¹². As described earlier, a Navy JFACC would be responsible for a much smaller operation and therefore the associated staff would be much smaller too. There would still be a requirement for considerable expertise across the

joint spectrum. Air campaigning requires constant communication with the National Command Authority, direct liaison with the various air force components, and exchanges with support organizations like the CINC's Joint Intelligence Center (JIC), Defense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and the Defense Mapping Agency. The Navy does not have a staff structured or trained to function in this critical role.

For the most part, the Navy is a supporting service which enables other forces to arrive in-theater and execute their mission. There are circumstances, like the political strike, when the Navy will be required to lead the joint effort to its conclusion. In order to successfully meet this challenge, the Navy must develop the capability to command and control a joint air campaign. Many issues concerning a naval JFACC need to be resolved prior to the next political raid.

1. Formalize JFACC responsibility within the CVBG and support that position with a standing joint staff. This staff should complete the entire training and deployment cycle with the battle group.
2. Correct existing hardware deficiencies which preclude the Navy from functioning as a JFACC. This includes adequate SHF communications, the embarked capability to transmit and receive target-quality imagery and finally good connectivity with the regional JIC.
3. Conduct regular fleet training exercises with scenarios which require utilization of the complimentary capabilities of Naval and Air Force assets.

IV.FORCIBLE ENTRY; TOMORROW'S JOINT OPERATION

Two key factors in the New World Order make forcible entry a mission of choice in today's austere funding environment. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the counterweight which opposed U.S. worldwide intervention has vanished. The strategic focus is now on the regional crisis which may require U.S. military intervention across the spectrum of conflict to maintain peace and stability. Operations similar to those in Iraq, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia are likely to become more frequent and numerous.

Coincidentally, the shrinking military budget has forced the closure of many forward operating bases. In future crisis, our military forces will have to come from afar and quite possibly fight their way into the area of conflict.

Each Service is quickly moving to reorganize and train forces to execute this forcible entry mission. A brief examination of a recent joint forcible entry operation is instructional with respect to the possible role of the CVBG.

URGENT FURY in Grenada serves to illustrate several important points. That operation included three separate forcible entry evolutions; an amphibious vertical assault, an airborne assault and an amphibious horizontal assault. The two amphibious assaults launched from naval platforms and were largely uncontested. An important point to note is that these forces enjoyed command of the sea and air while conducting their attacks.

The airborne assault on Point Salines airport was more challenging. Defense of the strip included at least four antiaircraft batteries, numerous runway obstacles and two enemy

battalions occupying entrenched defensive positions. The first MH-130E transport aircraft to deliver paratroopers drew a deadly barrage of fire and sustained considerable damage. The defensive fire was so intense that trailing flights were forced to abort their runs prior to the drop zone. The situation was critical for the 40 Rangers who parachuted from the first transport. They were under constant attack from superior forces while their reinforcements were forced to hold off because of intense resistance. Fortunately three AC-130 Spectre Gunships were orbiting lazily overhead. They were directed to destroy the large caliber guns which had been so effective against the first troop transport. The gunships laid down a lethal stream of fire, silencing the antiaircraft batteries which cleared the way for the remaining air drops. The tenacious Rangers and assault troops of the 82nd Airborne Division fought to expand their control over the airport. During the day long battle, USAF gunships and Navy carrier air assets played a key role by providing essential firepower against the enemy's large caliber guns and armored vehicles.¹³

An airborne assault like the one at Point Salines or any other forcible entry is extremely vulnerable during the critical insertion stage. Lightly armored transport aircraft, helicopters or landing craft must deliver lightly armed troops into a hostile environment. The battle for the airstrip or beach is always tenuous, and in order for it to be successful the battlespace surrounding the insertion must be controlled.

If fighter aircraft or SAM batteries were present in Grenada, the decisive MC-130E gunships could not have completed their enabling mission. In order for the forcible entry mission to be a viable one for the operational commander, he must gain control of the battlespace.

USAF Composite Wings. With this in mind, consider that the Air Force is currently organizing two composite forces designed as ready response commands. The 366TH Air Intervention Wing is structured to fly into a friendly airfield and begin independent combat air operations for up to seven days.¹⁴ The purpose of the Air Intervention Wing is to provide air power to a host nation like Saudi Arabia in a situation similar to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The second command under development is the Air-Land Operations Wing which is task organized for forcible entry into and operations from a hostile airfield. This wing would be called upon in scenarios like Panama and Grenada.¹⁵

The goal of these USAF composite wings is to improve the readiness of the force which will be called upon to do the initial fighting in wartime. The problems associated with employing combined-arms forces (like command and control, intelligence, logistics and tactical interoperability), are solved before they arrive in the CINC's Area of Responsibility. The composite wing is an integrated, task organized force with some self-sustaining capability. Currently the Air Force and the Army are the only two Services working together on the composite wing concept, but the Navy certainly has much to offer.

The Navy's Enabling Mission. The forward deployed CVBG could provide critical support for the Air Intervention Wing as it beds down at the host nation airfield or as the Air-Land Operations Wing fights to establish a foothold in hostile territory. The carrier air wing and ships of the battle group could gain battlespace control, enabling either type of composite wing to insert itself into a region. This would be very similar to the excellent support the CVBG provides to an Amphibious Ready Group as they conduct a forcible entry evolution from the sea.

The forcible entry evolution in Grenada was an adhoc joint effort against a small, lightly armed opponent. The lack of joint training and interoperability caused many problems and could have proved disastrous against a more capable enemy.

The Air Force and Army are now working to field a responsive, task organized force which is to be deployed from CONUS in response to a crisis faced by the CINC. It is very likely that a CVBG will be forward deployed and on-station in the crisis area. In this situation, the CVBG could perform an enabling mission by dominating the battlespace as the Air Force/Army composite force moves into theater. Developing the doctrine now on how all three Services could combine to complete a forcible entry evolution is essential. Unfortunately the Navy is not working with either composite wing to develop this joint capability. Without realistic joint training in the execution of missions like this one, the U.S. military will continue to approach operations like Grenada in an adhoc manner.

V. CONCLUSION

The loss of overseas bases, the decline in the number of CVBGs and the reduction in the number of Air Force wings affects the ability of the United States Military to maintain a forward presence and project power in a crisis. To make up for this loss, the USAF and Navy have unique capabilities which can be combined together to project decisive power around the globe.

In order to capitalize on these complementary capabilities, the Navy must move quickly to: (1) adapt a flexible approach to tailoring carrier air wings, (2) optimize the capabilities of the various forces within the CVBG to meet the regional threat, and (3) expand and enhance the CVBG's interoperability with all other Services, especially the Air Force. The Navy must be prepared to assume the role of a JFACC in order to take full advantage of the complimentary forces available from the other Services.

In these ways, the Navy can meet the challenge of Readiness and Strategic Agility set forth in the National Military Strategy. This will provide the combatant CINCs with the support they require to try and meet the challenges of Forward Presence and Crisis Response.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Tailor the CVBG to meet the regional threat.

A. Develop the capability to change the composition of the embarked air wing while the aircraft carrier is forward deployed.

B. Optimize the capabilities of the various forces within the CVBG for today's regional threat. The weapon platforms within the battle group were built to fight the forces of the former Soviet Union, and therefore their operational employment must be adapted to today's mission.

2. Train and staff the CVBG for joint operations.

A. Develop the capability to command and control joint air forces. The process of assigning a naval JFACC, the proper manning of a joint staff to support him, and where and how such a staff will function must be developed and exercised before the next crisis.

B. Train naval forces to be interoperable with the other Services, especially the Air Force. As the CVBG goes through the work-up cycle, large scale joint force operations should be conducted. Fleet exercises must include scenarios which require the integration of an Air Force composite wing and large amphibious forces.

C. Carrier air wing training should be fully integrated and evaluated with an Air Force composite wing during the intermediate and advanced warfare training phase of the deployment cycle. This would be an excellent opportunity to exercise a JFACC staff led by a naval aviator.

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3. Riley D. Mixson, "Where We Must Do Better," Proceedings, August 1991, pp. 38-39.
4. Chris Lawson, "The Corps carrier Roosevelt," Navy Times, 07 February 1993, p. 3
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9. Ibid., pp. 310-311.
10. Ibid., p. 312.
11. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, DRAFT COMMAND AND CONTROL FOR JOINT OPERATIONS, Joint Pub 3-56.1 (Washington: 1992) p. 8.
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15. Julie Bird, "AF-Army team set up for "forcible entry," AIR FORCE Times, 26 October 1992, p. 18.

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